DOCUMENTI

IAI

EARLY WARNING IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT: CONCEPTUAL QUESTIONS, PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS

by Radoslava Stefanova

Paper prepared for the meeting of the EuroMeSCo group on the Charter for Peace and Stability
Halki, Greece, September 12-14, 1999

ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI

EARLY WARNING IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT: CONCEPTUAL QUESTIONS, PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS

by Radoslava Stefanova

The concept of early warning is becoming increasingly relevant in the post-Cold War world due to the re-ascendance of regional and primordial types of conflict. While it would be imprecise to claim that the nature of conflict has changed at the end of the Cold War—it would be more correct to assert that some classic forms of conflict have re-emerged—a marked novelty in the global attitude towards conflict in general can be clearly noted. In particular, intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state for reasons of redeeming humanitarian disasters or human rights abuse has become frequent. The definition and explanation of the sociological origins of this new worldwide trend are clearly beyond the scope of this research, but it is important to note that an undoubted normative evolution in the conduct of world affairs has taken place. This socio-political change has defined new priorities in international relations, inter alia, by placing unprecedented importance on problems of conflict prevention, as opposed to respect for state sovereignty. In this context early warning, as part of the process of conflict prevention, constitutes a prescriptive policy choice, which is normative par excellence. In fact, more than at any time in the past, axiological considerations have come to constitute a sufficient policy making base.

The processes responsible for the transformation of the international normative system and the reconsideration of the concept of state sovereignty have also pushed new actors to the forefront of international relations. While classical theories of international conflict have traditionally developed on the basis of analyses of inter-state interactions, modern explanations have tended to include also various non-state actors. It is in this context that considerations of early warning should be defined and analyzed, as they transcend the faculties of the state and make necessary recourse to sub-state actors. In this sense it is particularly important to consider the current transformation of the international system when explaining the concept of early warning.

When applied to the Mediterranean, early warning assumes a distinctive dimension, as does conflict prevention, because of the intertwining history of conflict in the area. As will be discussed later, among the pre-conditions for the successful application of early warning is absence of large-scale hostilities, which, given the idiosyncrasy of the region is not always the case. It is clear, therefore, that in such historical and political conditions the net effect of the application of early warning and conflict prevention would be null, if not counter-productive. Furthermore, as already stated, the conduct of early warning is a normative policy-choice, which implies establishing an intricate network of coordinating bodies united by a common political will to prevent an impending conflict, and for that reason interested in cooperative monitoring of a risky area. In this sense, applying early warning and conflict prevention in the Mediterranean context looms out as a genuine conceptual and policy challenge. The purpose of this paper will thus be to establish whether application of early warning is relevant in the Mediterranean, and if so, what plausible policy procedures could be suggested for it.

Theoretical dimensions and definition of terms

Early warning of a conflict should be considered part of conflict prevention theory. It should be immediately specified that neither early warning nor conflict prevention policies per se guarantee the absence of conflict or a linear policy of conflict-avoidance on the part of the potential belligerents or an interested third party. Early warning is the first stage of conflict prevention, whose actual success is conceptually independent of the will to carry it out. Early warning thus consists in predicting impending violence before it breaks out based on a set of specific indicators that are theoretically and empirically known to lead to open conflict. While the selection of indicators that could be considered the harbingers of violence is subject to a debate, the concepts of early warning and conflict prevention are based on predictive reasoning and counterfactual theory.

Counterfactual theory examines the causal interaction between predetermined elements and complex, i. e. multi-dimensional outcomes that result within a fixed time frame. When applied to prognosis related to future events, counterfactual theory uses known (e. g. observed or observable) antecedents, which it presents as structurally linked to, i. e. inducing, one (or more) eventualities within a stated time lapse. From the point of view of counterfactual theory preventive action can be understood as logically connected inverted sequence of events. As already mentioned, the very essence of preventive action calls for intervention on the part of the actor intended to engage in conflict prevention before violence has erupted. The "preventor", therefore, will have to act on the basis of a set of early warning indicators, which in their interaction allow a presumption of impending violence. What is implied here is that there can never be an absolute certainty that the conflict will actually break out, nor that the particular action applied to prevent it will certainly produce the desired outcome.

The prediction of early warning will never be as precise, as say, weather forecasting, which has the technological capability to identify hurricanes and other natural disasters with a high degree of accuracy. Nor will predictions of ethnic conflict be able to rely as much on statistical evidence as, say, economic forecasts, that warn of recessions based on widely accepted leading economic indicators. Rather, the prediction of ethnic conflict can be linked to the process of medical diagnosis of diseases, for which there exists no conclusive physical test. In such cases physicians make a positive diagnosis based on the appearance of clusters of known symptoms, some of which are verifiable through testing, some merely observable.[1]

It is important to realize that attempting to predict social, political, or psychological phenomena through counterfactual reasoning can never have the technical precision of a mathematical estimate based on a known dataset. Behavioral occurrences function according to consequential logic, which has not yet been explained in a theory-conducive schematic way. Counterfactual explanations of socio-political events will thus have the axiomatic value of what is known based on observation, but not the scientific weight coming from the understanding of its organic content.

Another particularity of counterfactual reasoning as applied to social conflictual behavior

---

[1] Pauline H. Baker and John A. Ausnik, "State Collapse and Ethnic Violence: Towards a Predictive Model," *Parameters*, US War and Army College, vol. xxvi, N° 1, Spring, 1996, p. 23.

is the impossibility to produce a prognosis, which has veracity percentage close to that of weather forecasting, due the fact that, unlike in the theories of the natural sciences, the ceteris paribus assumption cannot be applied. In the socio-political reality it is impossible to determine the change of one element by holding the others constant, because it is precisely the interaction of the variable under scrutiny with the others that determines the direction of its change. A highly complex systemic setting characterizes, for example, ethnic or civil wars, where it is not so much the identification of a certain number of risk factors that is important to predict the outbreak of violence, but their interaction in the new situational environment that has been produced. Therefore, in determining the final picture, it is impossible to focus only on one systemic element of the conflict puzzle, because it can only make sense when analyzed in combination with the others. As Robert Jervis notes, "changes in one unit or the relationship between any two of them produce ramifying alterations in other units and relationships [which results in a] high degree of complexity as causation operates in ways that defeat standard forms of common sense and scientific method."[2]

It can therefore be concluded that even if counterfactual theory presents some fundamental elements, which will most likely turn extremely useful as methodological tools in the more complex development of this research, such as analyses on the consequential logic of early warning indicators, it cannot by itself provide a satisfactory methodological approach to the topic of conflict prevention. As a result, it should be borne in mind that the theoretical premises of early warning are still quite new particularly in the field of international relations, and there are still many conceptual controversies to open, a fact which impedes the construction of a secure policy based solely on theoretical premises.

Establishing structural parameters for early warning

Having defined early warning and having located it in the realm of international relations theory, two other structural components need to be briefly clarified before evaluating the plausibility of the concept's application in the context of the Mediterranean. The first concerns establishing what are the early warning indicators that need to be observed in order to predict an impending conflict, and the second has to do with establishing a generic procedure for policy application of early warning. With regard to both parameters, it should be noted that very little related literature is available that deals directly with this problematique. Therefore, much of the discussion to follow will be based on inductive speculation of different branches of international relations theory and will be subject to serious refinement in a more specialized form of research.

For the purposes of this study, however, three categories of early warning indicators will be put forward, keeping in mind that while important, as specified above, their individual components and linkage will not be derived and explained here. Another necessary limitation of the scope of this study is that the choice of these categories over others, in the absence of specialized data research, can be justified on a quite rudimentary basis, namely,

---

[2]Robert Jervis, "Counterfactuals, Causation, and Complexity," in Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin (eds.), *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 309.

one of common international relations axiomatic affirmations, contextual self-evidence, and personal discretion.

First among the early warning indicators to consider is the type of regime in the state under consideration. A classic thesis in international relations theory holds that democracies do not fight among each other. Furthermore, due to transparent collective decision-making based on the principle of representation through periodic elections, democracies tend to respect fundamental human rights more than other types of regimes, thus minimizing the probability for the occurrence of violence due to social dissatisfaction.

Scholarly discussions of conflict prevention have given rise to much controversy about whether democracy is really structurally conducive to the avoidance of violence.[3] Based on the footnoted sources, it could be claimed that there indeed seems to be evidence that democracies possess more war–avoiding tools than alternative state organizations, creating a structural environment, which seems to facilitate the effectiveness of various conflict prevention strategies, including early warning.

There is a need to differentiate, however, between democracy as a state of affairs and democratization as a process directed at it. While the former, in its stable and complete form, is indeed less prone to aggressive violence, the latter constitutes a structural change which tends to be accompanied by major systemic cataclysms, often conducive to conflict. Nonetheless, even democratizing states tend to favor peaceful settlements of contrasting relationships, rather than violent ones, despite the inherent structural weakness implied in various transition regimes.[4] The presence or the absence of a democratic state system, therefore, can be considered to constitute an effective early warning mechanism.

Besides examining the type of regimes, an analysis of regional geopolitics and related conflict precedents could also be considered to constitute a valid early warning category. A recent history of conflict in a geopolitical environment where territory, resources, or places of high social symbolic value are still disputed, most likely bides for incoming violence, particularly if the regimes in place in the prospective belligerents are not democratic.[5] It should be noted that despite sporadic affirmations to this effect, the linkage between conflict history based on geo-politics and the outbreak of violence is intuitive, rather than straight-forward. Again, the reason for the lack of a straight-forward scientific method lies in the unavailability of empirical data , due to the recent ascendance of conflict prevention, and consequently, early warning in the realm of international relations theory. For the purposes of this study the geopolitics-conflictual-history-unresolved-disputes-high-likelihood-for-violence pendulum will be assumed to be an effective early warning mechanism, even if

---

[3]C. Layne, "Kant or Cant: the Myth of the Democratic Peace" and D. Spiro, "The Insignificance of the Liberal Peace" International Security 19:2, Fall 1994; "Correspondence: The Democratic Peace," International Security, 19:4, Spring 1995; T. Risse, "Democratic Peace—Warlike Democracies? A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument," *European Journal of International Relations*, 1:4, December 1995.

[4] Michael Lund, "Preventing Violent Conflicts: Progress and Shortfall" in Peter Cross (ed.) *Contributing to Preventive Action* Conflict Prevention Network Yearbook 1997-98 (Ebenhausen: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 1998),.p. 19.

[5] R. J. Rummel, "Democracies ARE Less Warlike Than Other Regimes," *European Journal of International Relations* 1:4, December 1995.

some valid reservations, such as the strong influence of the local leadership against possible conflict recurrence, could be put forward. It should be noted, however, that the character of these reservations is even more difficult to conceptualize than the dependency already established, which finds some theoretical backing in social psychology.[6]

The third category of early warning indicators is even more controversial than the one already dealt with, and has very little conceptual support in main-stream political science theory. It has to do with a certain cultural proclivity towards conflict, which renders some nations more war-prone than others. Such arguments, which are quite often over-shadowed by more conventional real politik explanations for the occurrence of violence, are often quoted, for example, in relation to the Balkans (a notable reading in this respect are British parliamentary debates from the end of last century through the first decade of this century), the Middle East, or some parts in Asia. It is clear that this category holds very little scientific backing of any kind, and is in itself so controversial to predispose an ideological rather than theoretical debate, even if some scholars have actually considered cultural predisposition a valid conceptual explanation for the sequence of events.[7] It was deemed necessary to include it in this brief early warning taxonomy for the sake of completeness, rather than conviction. As large part of the theoretical premises of this research, this category is subject to empirical verification.

Procedures and instruments: a speculation

The final theoretical part of this research concerns the analysis of possible ways of operationalizing early warning in a given context. In fact, the above categories of indicators may serve as such, only if related mechanisms of information gathering and processing are in place. In this research structural passages of turning isolated facts into early warning indicators will be examined.

As already mentioned beforehand, early warning awareness tends to imply a normative choice of a conflict prevention activity. Therefore, in order to conduct any early warning activity, a violence avoiding determination on the part of a particular institution must be in place. Furthermore, most of the indicators contained in the broad categories examined above, such as large-scale human rights abuse, require a certain time frame to determine with certainty. As a result, early warning requires an elaborate organization of an authority that is aware of preventive mechanisms, has the faculty to commission monitoring and data gathering, and, finally, considers that the information gathered and processed can be used in a way to prevent impending violence. This implies possessing the necessary decision-making instruments, support and operation control mechanisms, area and policy expertise, and most importantly, the corresponding political influence to both carry out the early warning monitoring per se, and ensure that the information passes to authorities in a position to take appropriate action to prevent an expected conflict.

It is evident that these are particularly difficult conditions to fulfill, especially having in mind

---

[6] R. W. Mack and R. C: Snyder, "The Analysis of Social Conflict-Toward an Overview and Synthesis", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1, 1957, pp. 212-248.

[7] Beate Winkler, "Intercultural Conflicts and Approaches to Solutions*", Peace and the Sciences*, March 1996, pp. 5-6.

that early warning warrants expedient action, if violence is to be prevented. Here the question arises as to who could plausibly commission, coordinate, and make use of early warning capacities in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Clearly, until quite recently early warning faculties institutionally structured as just described, have been the privilege of states with regard to their internal affairs. Only with the beginning of the current decade have some international early warning capabilities been put in place, mostly on an ad hoc basis and availing of the national technical means of individual states. As a result it can be noted that conducting an early warning activity on a regional or international level, even if some partnership agreements are in place, is a very delicate and controversial endeavor.

First, signaling some early warning indicators, e.g. human rights abuses or unstable political regimes in place, even if conducted with the necessary transparency and within the framework of an established agreement, might create suspicion among neighbors and contribute to tensions, rather than dissipate them by creating suspicion and mistrust.

Second, it would not be realistically feasible to set up an independent data gathering center on a regional/international level because in the absence of independent information gathering network, countries would have to rely on their own intelligence sources for collecting and verifying data. Most states would consider evaluations related to civil relations within a neighbor a state secret and would be reluctant to share it with others. The political implausibility of intelligence sharing, especially in regions such as the Euro-Mediterranean, is quite evident.

Third, while information gathering and other early warning monitoring on the part of international non-governmental organizations, including think-tanks, humanitarian organizations, etc. is possible without consent on a governmental level, it should be noted that such activities could at times be considered directly or indirectly threatening the power of the regimes in place, and will most probably be hindered by governments in every way. It suffices to recall how international monitoring groups were thrown out of Iraq or Serbia to understand how important the collaboration of official authorities is to verify what is going on within a state.

Fourth, given the considerations just listed, which render the practical application of early warning extremely difficult to generalize, it should be pointed out that some "politically neutral" niches are nevertheless available for the conduct of early warning activities. These include humanitarian and natural disasters, such as famine, control of refugee flows, earthquakes, epidemic decease, etc. It could be presumed that in such cases political and power considerations will not be in contradiction with a concerted preventive action on a regional and international level.

Early Warning in the Euro-Mediterranean Context

Operationalizing the concept of early warning in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean area is a challenging undertaking, especially on a sub-regional level. The main difficulties stem from political considerations, which often run against inter-state cooperative arrangements necessitated to carry out early warning activities at a governmental level. Furthermore, such

hindrances also make the work of NGOs particularly difficult, as already explained above.

With such premise in mind, it should nevertheless be pointed out that there is space for the conduct of early warning in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Possibilities can be explored on two levels: one, that of exploiting existing institutional and political niches, and the other, that of suggesting how these could be elaborated, political circumstances permitting, to organize a more comprehensive system of early warning in the region.

Early Warning Based on Already Available Instruments

There are some possibilities for the conduct of early warning activities through what has been called the "Barcelona process", initiated in November 1995 by 27 states of the region, which agreed to a declaration of a multi-faceted partnership aimed at "giving their future relations a new dimension based on comprehensive cooperation and solidarity."[8] More specifically, the signatories agreed to work towards the creation of a common area of peace and security, whose realization can only be possible through collaboration, including one on early warning issues. Naturally, the Declaration has no binding force, and at this stage of regional relations it would be unrealistic to pretend that. However, it should be noted that on the one hand, in the background of the changing normative environment on a global level, declaratory statements of the Barcelona type have a strong moral as well as political weight on the basis of which a legally binding agreement can be envisioned in the long run.

On the other hand, given the difficult diplomatic situation particularly of the Middle East Peace Process,[9] even statements of declaratory nature of the Barcelona type are extremely important in that they lay the ground for stronger commitments by getting adversaries to talk. Quite beyond the moral commitment, the Barcelona process contains some real perspectives of arriving at a political consensus for conflict prevention through creating precedents of cooperation through learning based on mutual trust. Naturally, this aspect can be compromised by incidents eroding the fragile basis of good will, which permitted the launching of the Barcelona process. In any case, confidence building, or rather, partnership building, as it came to evolve after Barcelona, is undoubtedly a complex process which would only allow the needed political basis for the conduct of early warning for conflict in the very long run.

Having established that the both the political and the normative premises for early warning in the Euro-Mediterranean area realistically allow for the effective application of the concept in an indeterminate point in the future, it is nevertheless possible to identify several specific points on which, political circumstances permitting, and based on a regional consensus, early warning can be conducted even at present, albeit on an ad hoc basis.

In its chapter on political security partnership the Barcelona declaration contains clauses on democratization, respect for human rights and territorial sovereignty, disarmament,

---

[8] Text of the Barcelona Declaration, adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference, 27 and 28 November 1995, preamble.
[9] Even if in practically all documents of the Barcelona process, it is explicitly stated that it is not supposed to be linked in any way to the MEPP, in practice many scholars and officials agree that there is a clear interdependence between the two. See interview with Patrick Laurent, *Euromed Special Features*, N° 6, 1999.

cooperation in the fight against organized crime and terrorism, all of which will be difficult to encode in legal terms, given the current political situation in the region. Subsequent specifications of this chapter in the documents issued by the Euro-Mediterranean conferences in Malta and Stuttgart deepeened these aspects, particularly by producing at the latter, an informal set of guidelines for the elaborating a Euro-Med Charter on Peace and Stability. What is notable in the Guidelines for the Charter is the proposal to agree on an annex devoted to partnership building measures, which draw on all three chapters of the Barcelona Declaration and their further elaboration. What can be inferred from this decision is that security aspects can be built also on the basis of the chapter on economic and financial partnership and that of social, cultural, and human affairs.

One of the most important expressions of such indirect security building is, for example, the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Pilot Project for the "Creation of a Euro-Med System of Prevention, Mitigation and Management of Natural and Man-made Disasters" in 1998 near Rome. It was attended by almost all Barcelona partners, who agreed to share tasks related to the cooperation in emergency situations, such as earthquakes, forest fires, oil fires, oil splits, water table uprise, ground deformation, emergency medication, etc. Several lower-level meetings have been held since stressing on aspects of training, information sharing, and common actions in view of reacting to emergency situations which have arised as a result of natural disasters.

As mentioned above, information sharing between some of the Euro-Med partners might be problematic because of the necessity to rely exclusively on national technical means, the same used for intelligence purposes. However, progress made so far makes it plausible to believe that cooperation in disaster situations has the potential to become a real break-through in the region, where natural emergencies at times cannot be handled effectively but in cooperation with neighbors and partners. In this sense early warning acquires a broader meaning, namely, while not looking for armed conflict and violence indicators, interested parties are nonetheless preparing to act in practically analogous situations.

Anna Spiteri presents an elaborate system of early warning and emergency action through an Integrated Resource Management in the Euro-Mediterranean region, which could facilitate rapid decision-making when facing impending disasters.[10] In sum, the author envisions a "sectorial spill-over"[11] from an essentially technical collaboration in disaster prevention to a cooperative security arrangements, in which early warning for conflict will be an integral part. Such proposals might sound as rather banal reverberation of neo-functionalism, but it has to be recalled that security has become to be seen as a rather broad concept only in the 1990s, and it is not at all unrealistic to imagine spillover of cooperation from issues of environmental security to issues of soft security, and more generally to security understood in its classic sense. It is in this perspective that the Euro-Mediterranean partnership should be understood.

---

[10] Anna Spiteri, "Remote Sensing: The Tool of Integrated Coastal Zone Management: Towards Peace in the Mediterranean" in Fred Tanner (ed.) *Arms Control, Confidence Building and Security Cooperation in the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East* (Malta: Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta, December 1994), pp. 143-151.

[11] The term in its conceptual essentially functional meaning was coined by Philippe Schmitter, Professor at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy.

The same is valid for conflict early warning considerations. While at present information and technology sharing on early warning indicators are likely to create tensions, rather than reslove them, it is not too optimistic to expect that some cooperative experience in the field of disaster management might lay the ground for it in the future. Intentions in this respect were also expressed by partners when regional cooperation issues were discussed in Valencia this January. The guidelines for the Euro-Med Charter on Peace and Stability also foresees a gradual approach in strengthening the process of security cooperation overtime[12]. Naturally, it is fundamental not to overshoot cooperative intentions ahead of realistic political possibilities. In that it is vital to carry out all security-enhancing initiatives in the region, prime among these being the MEPP.

Some Suggestions for Practical Deepening of Early Warning in the Future

Suggesting concrete institutional strengthening of the Charter is the natural approach to suggest, but without the necessary political setting, as reiterated repeatedly above, such suggestions will remain purely academic speculations. Political climate permitting, however, a gradual approach should be adopted to give the Barcelona process more vigor. It is considered here that it would be superfluous to propose the creation of new institutions because the texts of the three declarations is almost exclusive in setting the terrain for successful and well-organized early warning activity. Therefore, efforts should be concentrated on giving the Barcelona documents more legal as well as political weight.
The gradual approach suggested here is aimed at arriving eventually at binding political accords between the partners, which would constitute a genuine institutionalization of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Clearly, at present this is not a feasible option, but incremental efforts could be made, based on stronger institutional settings, such as the one available through the OSCE, which would lay the terrain for a consistent reinforcement based on cooperation. As mentioned above, areas not directly related to security, but ones involving common needs transcending regional borders, such as reacting against natural disasters should be explored first. Some have also suggested a classical functionalist approach aimed at arriving at comprehensive security framework in the Euro-Mediterranean region through socio-economic development and soft security.[13] Such approach is thoroughly compatible with the establishment of functioning early warning capabilities in the area.

In more concrete terms, the gradual approach could be structured in the following way, naturally in the presence of the needed political will. First, on the example of the Guidelines to the Charter on Peace and Security, partners should prepare a similar document specifically aimed at regional early warning, but encompassing all three chapters. It should be particularly complete in areas where regional cooperation, such as data gathering, rapid alert, technical and humanitarian aid in cases of natural calamities, which necessarily involve sub-regions, rather than individual states. The objective is to gradually arrive at an autonomous institutional setting for early warning.

The role of the EU Commission here might be crucial, especially in encouraging the setting

---

[12] See point II.b of the Guidelines.
[13] Roberto Aliboni, "Re-Setting the Euro-Mediterranean Security Agenda*" The International Spectator*, vol. XXXIII, N° 4, October-December 1998, p.13.

of a regional early warning center. The chances for its success will be greater, if at first the center's objectives do not explicitly include conflict prevention, since the current political circumstances in the region would hardly allow it, but instead focus exclusively on technical cooperation in disaster relief. Besides a small coordinating unit (e. g. a Secretariat), on-field fact-finding missions and regional experts with the necessary expertise should constitute its stuff. Even if initially predicting political violence will not be one of the objectives of such a center, the structure needed for early warning for conflict, as described above, is essentially inter-operable.

At a subsequent level it might be suggested that one or more of the aspects of this early warning for natural disasters should be considered as separate agreements with binding force. For example, it may be agreed that if it is established by the center's experts that country A is directly threatened by a natural disaster, while countries B and C are indirectly threatened by it, all should collaborate to redeem the costs. Some participation from all states in the region could also be envisioned as mandatory, by creating a common disaster relief fund, for instance. Given the fragile geological nature of the Mediterranean,[14] it would seem that a similar arrangement would render concrete results from its very inception.

The next step of setting up an early warning unit for the Euro-Mediterranean area would be to introduce strengthened mechanisms of consultation on some security problems not involving particular political controversies, such as poverty relief or organized crime. At present, however, even topics of this kind are quite controversial to handle, and it is unlikely to expect to arrive at a consensus between Partners in order to extend to such an extent the center's responsibilities.

Much improvement in putting such suggestions into action could be achieved if the EU's early warning capabilities are strengthened independently, and within the framework of the CFSP. The EU's Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit (PPWEU) that is being set up might be very helpful in this respect. For example, it might be proposed to use its technical and institutional setting at an initial stage, before it is agreed by Partners where and how to set up a Euro-Mediterranean Early Warning Center.

In the medium-longer run, some strictly security mechanisms for the Euro-Mediterranean might be drawn on the example of the OSCE: These could include trigger mechanisms for consultation on pending security problems, whereby a Partner would have the right to raise a problem it considers a security concern for the area. Another mechanism, modeled on the structure of the OSCE could be one for consultation on emergency issues of military nature, whereby a group of Partners can convene a meeting at a governmental level and jointly decide on a particular course of action.

Finally, it should be noted again that in such hypothetical proposal for establishing and strengthening the Euro-Med early warning mechanisms, the role of the EU is fundamental. First and foremost, it can offer some help through its own institutional structures, which are quite advanced due to the structurally different nature of the Union, as compared to that of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It is also not at all far-fetched to expect and to demand that the EU make available some of its resources in the setting and strengthening of a Euro-Med early warning unit, not least, because the EU's own security hinges on that of the

---

[14] Spitteri, p. 144.

Mediterranean. Given the geo-political belonging of the EU's Southern rim to the Mediterranean area, the expected EU institutional reforms might envision some funding devoted to the Euro-Mediterranean security as part of the CFSP. If the gradual approach adopted here is followed, initially such support should not require the commitment of large amount of funds, as it would only concern the setting up of a small permanent unit of technical experts dealing with natural calamity forecasting, and the affiliation of some known regional specialists, who could advise on the broader security context. For this purpose some of the already existing structures throughout the region can be used. Only at a much later stage, based on a qualitative change in the political situation in both the EU and the Mediterranean, this small unit may have to be significantly reinforced also by committing more resources to it.

Some conclusions

What emerges from this brief overview of conceptual and policy problems of early warning applicability in the Euro-Mediterranean is that the global normative predisposition has hardly been more conducive to the conduct of conflict prevention activities. Nonetheless, having established that early warning itself is a positivist approach to the conduct of state affairs, one that has only recently started to take prevalence in contemporary international relations, major applicability difficulties emerge.

First, at a conceptual level, most of the premises of early warning are axiomatic, rather than theoretical, due to the virtual lack of empirical verification of the basic hypotheses. As an integral part of conflict prevention, the concept of early warning needs to mature through the verification of its validity based on the classic scientific method. In the meantime, however, several early warning categories can be isolated from classic social science theories, which can be analyzed on the basis of counterfactual and predictive methodologies with a relatively satisfactory percentage of veracity.

Second, at a general institutional level, favorable political circumstances consisting in generating regional leaders' will for cooperation, are an absolute must for the successful conduct of any fact-finding and information-gathering activity pertinent to early warning for conflict. If political will on the part of the governing structures of the region concerned is hesitant and inconsistent, strategies should be devised to cultivate and strengthen it on the basis of cooperation precedent and learning and confidence building. Only in such way can linkage be created from general awareness of conflict incipience to early action to counter it. Even if not directly related to early warning, such strategies are fundamental in order to set the ground for conflict prevention proper. In relation to these findings, it was also established that while important with regard to policy implementation, non-state actors of different kind cannot satisfactorily conduct early warning missions without cooperation on the part of the governments concerned.

With regard to the Euro-Mediterranean area some propitious pre-conditions were created with the launching of the Barcelona process, which have been gradually strengthened. While political reality in the area clearly impedes the adoption of legally binding commitments for the moment, much can be done in boosting cooperation precedents and creating an atmosphere of mutual trust. Such strategies should be incorporated to make part

of a aggregate (i. e. based on all three chapters of the Declaration) step-by-step approach in the area, where most of the results should be expected in the long run.

In more concrete terms, the broad institutional framework of Barcelona allows the build-up of mutual trust through cooperation in politically-neutral areas of common concern, such as disaster relief, famine, and economic development. A small center with a relatively modest resource pool, quite within the financing possibilities of the EU Commission alone, might institutionalize this initial stage of the process. In the medium-to-long run such center may start to deal with early warning proper, should political circumstances create a propitious environment for such activities. In the long run binding agreements for collaboration to this effect might be feasible.

Such concerted multi-track approach aimed at the establishment of early warning capabilities as part of a broad strategy of area cooperation and integration should be seen as an investment in the regional security and stability. It is in such context that actors capable of rendering concrete results aimed at boosting regional security should be encouraged to get directly involved.